



## Road Rage

May 1, 2008

Most drivers can remember at least one incident in the last 12 months when they were annoyed or angered by another driver. In retaliation, they flashed their lights, honked their horns, yelled at the other driver, or even made a rude gesture. Usually, nothing serious develops from such an incident, but such actions can escalate into lethal violence.

A major study in the US which focused on only the most violent events, found 10,037 road rage incidents in the US between 1990 and 1996. Almost half of these involved the use of firearms, clubs, knives and fists. Many ended in death. Some drivers opened their trunks and pulled out tire irons; others pulled their gun from the glove box.



What is road rage? Although many of us experience frustration and anger while driving, it's not road rage until we act on it. These actions can run all the way from honking your horn to injuring the other driver. When you add intimidation and dangerous driving to the definition, the statistics are even more compelling. Some experts have explained road rage as a product of driver frustration with overcrowded roadways and our complicated lives.

Statistics show anyone can be an active participant in a road rage incident. Although the majority of incidents were caused by males between the ages of 18 and 26, others were caused by business people, educators, women, and the elderly. Since we don't know what drivers to avoid, we need a strategy to help us avoid getting into a dangerous situation:

- Drive defensively. Safe driving practices are always the best way to keep safe and secure.
- Don't drive aggressively. That's an accident waiting to happen.
- Don't tailgate. Drivers often feel rushed or in danger when the car travelling behind them is too close.
- Use your turn signals well in advance of your turn. Nothing is more aggravating than when the driver in front of you decides they need to turn left while they are waiting for the light to turn green.
- If you find yourself being followed by someone who appears angry at you, do not drive home or pull off the road. Drive to the local police detachment or other safe areas.
- Don't drive slowly in the fast lanes.

If you get frustrated or angry at another driver:

- Don't let your emotions get the best of you. Act cautious when faced with an aggressive driver's actions. Yield the lane, give them the parking spot or just ignore them.
- Don't gesture or yell at another driver.
- Don't use your lights or horn to communicate frustration to another driver.

*For additional information contact: Your Unit Additional Duty Safety Officer, or Your Unit Collateral Duty Safety Officer, or Installation Safety Office – (757) 878-3740*